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SAAM, SAPR And SAFE Are More Than Just Acronyms

Filed under [FORCE HEALTH AND SAFETY](#), [HEATH](#), [SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION](#) (ONE COMMENT)

By [Naval Hospital Bremerton](#) Public Affairs and Lt. Ken Padgett, NHB Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Coordinator



Our hope is that the acronyms SAAM, SAPR and SAFE are not just disregarded abbreviations of military jargon, but that each immediately bring an understanding that sexual assault is a crime. That is our goal for recognizing April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) because the Department of the Navy does not tolerate sexual assault.

Nationally, SAAM is a monthly commitment to raise awareness and promote the prevention of sexual violence through use of special events and public education.

This year’s theme is “Live Our Values: Step Up to Stop Sexual Assault” with the stated goal to “Live Our Values” every day, all year long. “Step up” is a direct reference to intervene when appropriate, report crimes, and support victims to help stop sexual assault and sexual harassment. NHB’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) and Sexual Assault Forensic Examinations (SAFE) are comprehensive programs staffed by dedicated personnel that reinforce a culture of prevention, response, and accountability for the safety, dignity, and well-being of Sailors and Marines.

The acronyms have been active this month at NHB. Victim Care Protocols were tested with a SAPR and SAFE drill on April 10. The drill was a vital part of NHB’s on-going support of SAAM to ensure Victim Care Protocols get handled in a standard, coordinated response whenever needed to meet the healthcare needs of sexual assault victims.


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Being able to conduct SAFE exams is a vital service to provide here at NHB. In case of a sexual assault at another command, victims can come here to receive medical care and receive an exam if they wish. Holding such a drill helps better prepare our departments in the hospital in case they encounter a Sexual Assault while here at work. This also provides an opportunity for the command victim advocates to reach silent victims and tell them that they don't have to go through this alone and there is help out there.



Sharing care and concern to combat crime at Naval Hospital Bremerton's Sexual Assault Awareness Month informational table are Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Nathan Cole, Orthopedic Clinic, and Hospitalman Taylor Ellison of General Surgery who query, quiz and share sexual assault facts, figures and uncomfortable realities with Lt. j.g. Matthew Ozanich, accounting department head (U.S. Navy photo by Douglas H. NHB Public Affairs).

NHB Victim Advocates made sure that as many staff members and beneficiaries as possible understand that April is SAAM. At our weekly SAAM informational table by the Terrace Dining Facility, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Nathan Cole of Orthopedic Clinic and Hospitalman Taylor Ellison of General Surgery manned the static display during peak hours. They queried, quizzed and shared with passersby on sexual assault facts, figures and uncomfortable realities.

Our victim advocates are absolutely dedicated in their position. They are all essential in what they bring to help someone in need. They bring a perspective to what they do because the unfortunate truth is some have been victims themselves.

They are not there to judge. They are there to help and provide support for someone through the entire process. They receive comprehensive training to immediately provide front-line, deck-plate prevention, response, and accountability for the safety, dignity, and well-being of Sailors and Marines.

We know there are those who are scared. Victim advocates are there to take care of someone who just gone through a horrible experience not just medically, but also emotionally. Our job is not to penalize or harm a career, but to get that person the care they need and deserve.

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It’s also our job to utilize SAAM as an opportunity to tell every Sailor that sexual assault ends with you. Be a bystander, help others, listen, and spread the word about sexual assault and let the world know how it affects every single one of us. So many victims are out there, and they’re silent. We need to end the silence. We are all warriors in the battle against preventing sexual assault.

On a regular basis, NHB ensures that sexual assault education is provided to every Sailor. There is an informational photo board on the first floor displaying the command’s victim advocates, so staff as well as beneficiaries are aware of who they can turn to for questions or help. Additionally DoD Safe Helpline posters are affixed throughout NHB so everyone knows where to turn for professional assistance.

Our acronyms provide a balance of focused education, comprehensive response, compassionate advocacy, and just adjudication that promotes professionalism, respect, and trust, while preserving Navy mission readiness. And that’s not jargon to be ignored.

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Fedup

I applaud the work of all our victim advocates and those at the deck-plate level working to prevent sexual assaults. Unfortunately the shocking numbers of victims won’t change until some fundamental changes occur in our culture – stopping the promotion or tolerance of alcohol abuse, treating all ranks of sexual assaulters equally, and changing the mentality and thus actions of the top DOD leadership. Alcohol is involved in almost all sexual assaults, but we only pay lip service to abuse prevention. Junior personnel are smacked down if perceived to have perpetrated an assault, but the General who commits fraternization, adultery, sexual harassment, and pleas his way out of an obvious assault conviction with slick lawyering and military justice bias, receives barely a slap on the wrist and gets to retire with a “sorry for the inconvenience” from the Army judge. The top brass talk against sexual assault because nowadays they have to, but when it comes to action they just promote the status quo by fighting changes to the UCMJ and military justice.

So keep up the motivated work at our MTF and unit levels, but there has to be more advocacy and push back against the self-serving double-speak at the higher levels.